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ART. VI. — *Wesley and Methodism*. By ISAAC TAYLOR.
New York : Harper & Brothers. 1852. 12mo. pp. 328.

THE anti-Romish movement of the sixteenth century resulted, not from a single impulse, but from the combination of widely dissimilar forces. The Church of Rome had done equal violence to men's religious and civil rights. With iron grasp, she had compressed with one hand the collective conscience of Western Christendom, while with the other she had been writing her indelible Corban on so large a proportion of public and private property and revenue, as to cripple enterprise and industry, embarrass sovereigns, and impoverish nations. God and Mammon were alike her enemies. While reviving spirituality and devotion spurned her leaden yoke, needy sovereigns and profligate nobles coveted her abbey-lands, her wine-cellars, and her ingots.

On the continent of Europe, the true reformers retained their ascendancy in the movement, while the "spoils party" marched under their banners, and appropriated the fruits of their iconoclasm in all its forms. In England, on the other hand, there was no indigenous Protestantism. Anger and lust first gave, and cupidity sustained, the impulse, which issued in what is called the English Reformation. During the brief reign of Edward, indeed, the influence of Geneva was strongly felt both in theology and in individual character. The liturgy was expurgated, many Romish usages were discontinued, and many Romish doctrines were modified. But the fires of Smithfield and the reëstablishment of the papal authority destroyed almost all vestiges of the Latimer and Ridley school; so that, on Elizabeth's accession, the revolution in the national religion was hardly less arbitrary, or more the result of conscientious anti-Romanism, than had been the like revolution under her father's auspices; — yet with this difference, that the symbols and services of the Church, having become semi-Protestant under Edward, necessitated a wider departure from Romanism than would otherwise have been consistent with the views of Elizabeth and her prelacy. From this time, the rapid influx of continental Protestantism, instead of leavening the Church, gave rise

to the several divisions of the Puritan faction, and to the culminating power of Presbyterianism and Independency. Had not Charles II. been openly a truce-breaker, and secretly under Romish influence, the Church, as restored under his auspices, would have comprehended the milder forms of dissent, and have become closely assimilated to the Lutheran and Calvinistic bodies on the Continent. But the war of extermination under Charles and his ill-starred brother almost eliminated Puritanism from the kingdom, while it found a congenial asylum in the North American colonies.

The Church of England was thus left, on the accession of William and Mary to the throne, neither Protestant nor Romish. Its articles were, indeed, strongly tinged with the Genevan theology; but its liturgy had never been brought into conformity with them. On the other hand, it was conformed to the theory of baptismal regeneration, and recognized as members of the Church and fit candidates for heaven all baptized persons not excommunicated, so that the burial-service was tantamount to a sentence of expurgation and salvation. But while these Romish notions were embodied in the liturgy, the English Church had cut itself loose from the traditions which alone could give them a strong hold upon the popular belief; and there was, at the same time, too much religious intelligence for their passive reception by thinking men. Then, too, the dependence of the Church upon the State and the strong Erastian tendencies of its prelacy were unfavorable to a high tone of religious faith or sentiment; while the tenure of ecclesiastical livings was such as to throw them frequently into the hands of men whom the people could never have elected, and could not possibly reverence either as teachers or exemplars of piety. In this posture of affairs, it is by no means strange that infidelity should have made its appearance in circles of high intelligence and culture, and should have infused itself largely into the popular mind. The deistical writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries comprised some of the most profound scholars, acute reasoners, and brilliant rhetoricians of their times. Their works had little of the coarse ribaldry which subsequently made infidelity infamous, and were often rendered attractive by the forcible

ble exhibition of the great truths of natural religion and the fundamental principles of ethics. Their popularity called forth the antagonism of many of the best minds in the Church, and drafted for the defence of the faith the very men, who else would have been its most effective teachers and its most conspicuous ornaments. The controversy was necessary, and was nobly sustained; but the very fact that Christianity was contending for its existence prevented its making any aggressive movement on abounding worldliness and profligacy.

The condition of the dissenting Churches in the early part of the seventeenth century was in some respects widely different from that of the Establishment. The double burdens which their members bore for the support of religious institutions, and their numerous civil disabilities, were a guaranty for their sincerity and devotedness. To the names of Watts, Doddridge, and Lardner, we might add many more of unsurpassed fidelity and excellence in their respective spheres of duty, whose virtues gave lustre to their age, and whose writings will instruct and edify generations yet to come. But the line of separation was then sharply drawn. The walls of the Established Church were impervious to light from beyond its pale. Dissenters might occupy a respectable, but not a commanding, social position. Excluded from the Universities and from all official posts beyond their own congregations, they exerted an influence immeasurably below their merits, and their truly illustrious men were much less known and honored in their lifetime than they are now. The missionary spirit had not been awakened among them, and the quiet occupancy of their own posts filled up their measure, and satisfied their standard, of duty.

Meanwhile, there were on English soil growing multitudes, for whose religious needs no provision was made, and who were the subjects of no clerical ministration whatever, except in the articles of baptism, marriage, and burial. The Church was in substantially the same condition in which parliamentary representation was before the passage of the Reform Bill. Parishes retained the territorial limits of much earlier times, while population had dwindled away in some localities and had rapidly increased in others. Thus a hamlet of a dozen souls

might have its well-served curacy, while the incumbent of St. Giles had parishioners enough to people a brace of German principalities. The collieries, the dock-yards, the poorer neighborhoods in cities, persons engaged in coast-wise navigation, and the dwellers in the purlieus of wharves and warehouses, were, for the most part, in a condition of virtual heathenism. Bible societies had not been thought of, cheap reading for the millions was a later invention, and the ability to read was not frequent enough among the less privileged classes to enable them to profit largely by the printed page. There was no system in operation for the general diffusion of intellectual light, moral culture, or religious sentiment.

It was under these circumstances that Methodism had its birth. John Wesley, its founder, seems to have enjoyed the best possible Providential training for his mission. His father, though the son and grandson of ejected ministers, held a distinguished place among the clergy of the Established Church, and was devotedly and somewhat bigotedly attached to its institutions and its worship. His mother was the daughter of an eminent non-conformist divine, and, though outwardly reconciled to the Church by her marriage, retained through life her strong sympathies with dissent, and her independence of prescribed and conventional modes of religious action. During her husband's frequent absences, she held religious meetings at her own house on Sunday afternoons, notwithstanding his strong disapprobation and earnest remonstrances. The son inherited from one parent his life-long dread of separation from the Establishment, from the other, the religious zeal which could not brook the straitlacing of canonical forms, places, and seasons. At six years of age, John was almost miraculously rescued from the conflagration of his father's house,—an event which, in after life, impressed him with a strong sense of his peculiar mission and destiny, and was commemorated by himself in one of his engraved portraits, which had a burning house for its background, with the motto, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?" While he was at school, there occurred at his father's house a series of unaccountable and reputedly supernatural disturbances, probably the result of mischievous contrivance

on the part of some of the servants or neighbors, yet adapted to awaken in the mind of a sensitive boy a profound feeling of the reality and nearness of the spiritual world.

At Oxford, Wesley, as an undergraduate, was a youth of pure morals and of unblemished sobriety of deportment; but when the time for the choice of a profession drew nigh, he was not sufficiently assured of his own religious state, to contemplate the ordination vows without conscientious scruples as to his fitness to take them. The treatise *De Imitatione Christi* and Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*, about this time, led him into regions of more intimate religious experience, and rendered essential aid in his preparation of heart for the sacred office. Shortly after his ordination, he was elected to a Fellowship; and when he returned to Oxford to discharge its duties, he found his brother Charles a member of a religious society among the students, which had received, partly in derision, and partly on account of the methodical and somewhat ascetic life of its members, the *sobriquet* of Methodists. Of this circle John became the leader. The influences derived from these associates were adapted to strengthen and deepen the devotional element in his character, but at the same time to alienate his sympathies from the world at large, and to shut them up within a sort of close corporation of rigid pietists. Yet this period of his life must have been invaluable as a season of spiritual nurture for his subsequent labors. In after years, he was too busy and care-cumbered for prolonged retirement or contemplation, and a superficial piety would have been exhaled in the incessant and monotonous routine of journeying, correspondence, financial administration, and extemporaneous preaching. This interval, consecrated to devout introspection, religious communion, and the passive luxury of meditation and prayer, rendered his inward life so rich, full, and fervent, that he never afterwards sank into the perfunctory discharge of the clerical office, but retained, to the day of his death, the freshness of his zeal and the warm glow of a heart in constant intercourse with heaven.

At this period, he shrank from the active duties of his profession, and declined a curacy under his father, with

the prospect of succession to his living, on the ground that his own personal salvation would be endangered by intercourse with miscellaneous society. He however suddenly adopted the resolution of going to the then newly-planted colony of Georgia, as a chaplain and missionary. On his passage, he became deeply interested in a party of Moravian fellow-passengers, united with them in their daily religious services, imbibed much of their social and loving spirit, and learned from them that the active service of man was the true post of loyalty to God. On his arrival at Savannah, he entered upon a course of ministerial and pastoral duty, in which we discern the first distinct foreshadowing of what he afterwards became. With punctilious adherence to the rubric of the Church, even where custom had modified it, he connected many extra-ecclesiastical observances and practices. He established a regular system of parochial visitation, and instituted a series of social meetings, not unlike the more recent Methodist class-meetings. He preached earnestly against luxury in apparel, and was himself an example of the severest self-denial in things innocent, as well as in matters of doubtful expediency. His brother Charles, who had accompanied him, pursued a not dissimilar course at Frederica, only with a wilder zeal and less discretion. Such close and merciless censors of manners and morals, such purists of the inmost initiation, were ill adapted to the lax notions and easy habits of a new colony. They encountered serious embarrassment and opposition, and probably never gave so much gratification to the governor and to the major part of his subjects, as when they severally reëmbarked for England.

Meanwhile, Whitefield had commenced drawing multitudes to listen to him in Bristol and in London. His lifelong and unbounded popularity is a mystery, which has never been fully solved. His printed sermons are meagre, vapid, and many degrees below mediocrity. His endowments as a pulpit orator were indeed great, but by no means unique. Yet he could command at once the reverence of the loftiest, and the control of the humblest, minds, the hearty admiration of brilliant and accomplished scoffers and infidels, and the rapt attention of the coarsest and most ignorant. We have repeatedly conversed with old people

who had heard him preach in their youth; and their uniform testimony has been, that his sermons and their delivery had no one remarkable characteristic exclusively their own, and yet that no eloquence could equal his in its simultaneous influence over persons of every age, condition, and culture. We are disposed to ascribe his power, first, to his intense and vivid realization of the truths of religion as ever-present elements of his own experience, and, secondly, to the fact that in every sermon he arraigned his hearers before the tribunal of the Omniscient Judge, and dwelt solely on the relation in which they stood to God, as guilty, accountable, death-bound, and immortal beings. His active religious consciousness imparted that indescribable glow of countenance and manner, which wrought even upon the deaf, and those beyond the sound of his voice, with hardly less power than upon those within reach of his words; while his uniform habit of direct appeal to his hearers, as resting either beneath the condemning sentence or the complacent regard of the Almighty, forced home upon every soul the question which no human being can ever put to himself without the concentration of his whole moral nature upon the answer,—"How stand I at this moment in the eye of the omnipresent God?"

Whitefield had just left London, when John Wesley arrived there on his return from Georgia. Whitefield had no administrative talent, and was effective solely as an awakening preacher. Wesley was a *Methodist* by nature, had a genius for system, and attached little value to sporadic and unorganized effort. He at once gathered the new converts into bands or classes, with rules for mutual vigilance and helpfulness in the spiritual life, and with definite forms for the introduction, training, testing, and final reception of catechumens. The society embraced at the outset only between forty and fifty persons; but its constitution involved the very same principles, which are now embodied in the great Methodist hierarchy on both sides of the Atlantic. The *class* is the integral element, the paradigm of Methodism. The classes are the integers of the congregation, the congregations of the local conference, the local conferences of the general conference; and at every stage the typical form is repeated, the official

heads or representatives of each lower class constituting the members or laity of the next higher. Our limits will not permit us to follow Wesley through the details of a period of active service seldom equalled in duration, and entirely unparalleled in extent, in laboriousness, and in vigor of body and mind unimpaired, till he had completed the full cycle of fourscore years. We shall enter more fully into the merits and defects of his system, when we have taken some brief notice of his principal coadjutors.

Second, and hardly second, to John, stands Charles Wesley, in the annals of Methodism. Among rude and unlettered people, the soul is reached mainly by impressions upon the organs of sense, and in no way so effectually as through music. Every popular movement in social reform, political regeneration, or religious revival, has had its own canon of poetical inspiration and its own peculiar type of lyrical melody. Hans Sachs merits a foremost place among the Reformers of the sixteenth century; and popery might have still been the *Paganism* of many a village and hamlet in now Protestant Germany, had not the minstrel cordwainer flooded the land with anti-Romish songs and ballads. Among the English poets of the sanctuary, it is almost a mockery to name Tate and Brady; for in the days of the Wesleys, the singing of their psalms merely filled up the robe-changing interval in the service of the Church, while all the musical power and the religious impression of the orchestra were concentrated in those majestic chants and anthems, the introduction of which into the worship of Dissenters has transfused new life into their too tame and barren devotional forms. Watts and Doddridge were unsurpassed in their peculiar vein; but their hymns were best adapted to the quiescent condition of the religious communities to which they belonged. They represented the statics of piety. Methodism demanded a psalmody which should embody its dynamic forces. This desideratum Charles Wesley supplied. With a rhythmical ear, a clarified taste, and a tender sympathy with every phasis and transition of spiritual experience, an emotional nature always profoundly moved, an intimate conversance with the Scriptures, and a lyrico-dramatic power of elaborating all their materials, whether of history, doctrine, precept, or prophecy, he became the life and

soul of the new movement; and it is due to him, that, however inane the preaching may be, it is impossible that a Methodist congregation should part unimpressed and unedified. In their metrical form, in their musical cadence and mellifluous flow, his hymns occupy the first place and an almost solitary eminence in the English language. They can hardly be read unmusically, and almost sing themselves. Then, too, it has been well said of them, that they are not written on abstract subjects, such as faith, humility, resignation, but always represent the religious life in some one of its concrete states or movements, so that each might be assumed as a leaf of autobiography. But we can do them more ample justice by the following paragraphs from the book placed at the head of this article.

“Ought not then the disposing hand of God to be acknowledged in this instance, remarkable as it is, that, when myriads of uncultured and lately ferocious spirits were to be reclaimed, a gift of song, such as that of Charles Wesley, should have been conferred upon one of the company employed in this work? To estimate duly what was the influence of this rare gift, and to measure its importance, one should be able to recall scenes and times gone by, when Methodism was much nearer to its source than now it is, and when ‘Hymn 147, page 145,’ announced by the preacher in a tone curiously blending the perfunctory with the animated,

‘O Love Divine, how sweet thou art!’

woke up all ears, eyes, hearts, and voices, in a crowded chapel. It was, indeed, a spectacle worth the gazing upon! It was a service well to have joined in (once and again) when words of such power, flowing in rich cadence, and conveying, with an intensity of emphasis, the loftiest, the deepest, and the most tender emotions of the divine life, were taken up feelingly by an assembly of men and women, to whom, very lately, whatever was not of the ‘earth—earthy’ had neither charm nor meaning.

“Rugged forms were those that filled the benches on the one hand; nor were they the fairest in the world that were ranged on the other; but there was soul in the erect posture when the congregation rose to sing, as well as in the glistening eye; and it was a cordial animation that gave compass to the voices of these, the ransomed of Methodism. Perhaps it was a little more than a particle of meaning that some gathered from the hymn. But to the hearts of many, its deepest sense—the poet’s own sense

of the words—was quite intelligible, and was intimately relished. Who could doubt it, that had an eye to read the heart in the beaming countenances around him? Thus it was that Charles Wesley, richly gifted as he was with graces, genius, and talents, drew souls—thousands of souls—in his wake, from Sunday to Sunday, and he so drew them onward from earth to heaven by the charm of sacred verse!

“It may be affirmed that there is no principal element of Christianity, no main article of belief, as professed by Protestant Churches—that there is no moral or ethical sentiment, peculiarly characteristic of the Gospel—no height or depth of feeling, proper to the spiritual life, that does not find itself emphatically, and pointedly, and clearly conveyed in some stanza of Charles Wesley’s hymns. These compositions embody the theory, and the practice, and the theopathy of the Christian system; and they do so with extremely little admixture of what ought to be regarded as questionable, or that is not warranted by some evidence of Scripture. What we have here before us is a metrical liturgy; and by the combination of rhythm, rhyme, and music, it effectively secures to the mass of worshippers much of the benefit of liturgical worship. Such a liturgy, thus performed by animated congregations, melted itself into the very soul of the people, and was perhaps that part of the hour’s service which, more than any other, produced what, to borrow a phrase, we might call *digestive assimilation*. It would secure this, its beneficial effect, in moulding the spirits of the people, by its iteration, by its emphatic style, and by aid of the pleasurable excitements of music.” pp. 91–93.

Fletcher of Madeley deserves mention as one of the most conspicuous luminaries of Wesleyan Methodism. He combined two seemingly inconsistent personalities, having been, in one aspect, a narrow-minded, hair-splitting controversialist, and in another, a man of the most tender sensibilities, the most fervent piety Godward, and the most genial charity manward. He was the chief champion of the Wesleyan or Arminian portion of the Methodists, after the doctrinal schism in 1771, between the Conference and the Calvinistic party under the auspices of Lady Huntingdon. In this capacity he was verbose, repetitious, and pointless, compensating by the crassitude of his walls of defence for the bluntness of his aggressive weapons. As a Christian man, he stood in the direct line of spiritual descent from St. John; and, while the dust of half a century must rest on the most recently read

copy of his "Checks to Antinomianism," the memory of his apostolic meekness, humility, and love is still fresh and fragrant, as when he was first translated from the sphere of his earthly labors.

In this connection, we must not forget Dr. Coke, the first superintendent or Bishop of the Methodist Church in this country. A man of family and fortune, he made an unreserved surrender of himself to the work of a Christian missionary, in behalf of a despised body of schismatics. He encountered the perils of unexplored forests and savage men in the New World, and penetrated, with his reconciling message, numerous new settlements where public worship had never been celebrated before. He frequently chose a central spot in the depths of some wilderness region, and collected the inhabitants of a wide circuit for religious exercises. On such occasions, the novelty of the scene and the magnificent features of a primeval forest enhanced the impression wrought by the preacher's eloquence, and multitudes were often led to the simultaneous expression of penitence, faith, and religious ecstasy. These instances of marked success gave rise to the permanent institution of camp-meetings, which, with their frequent extravagance and disorder, have undoubtedly been the means of benefit immeasurably overbalancing their incidental evils, especially in these newly occupied regions too sparsely settled for the regular establishment of churches or ministers. Dr. Coke's American mission was the occasion of the first Methodist Episcopal ordination. Wesley had previously declined the exercise of Episcopal functions, on the ground that British soil was canonically occupied by Bishops of apostolic descent. But in America, there was no Protestant bishop; and on this fact Wesley based the right of consecrating Dr. Coke by the imposition of hands, under the title of superintendent, but with the power of admitting approved licentiates to holy orders. Dr. Coke consecrated Asbury as Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America; and from their joint acts are derived the present constitution of that Church and the alleged legitimacy of its office-bearers.

During Wesley's lifetime, his institution assumed none of the prerogatives of a separate Church on British

soil. The Wesleys, Fletcher, Coke, and very many of their associates, continued through life undeposed ministers of the English Church, and conformed to the rites of that Church at all canonical places and hours. The design was not to supersede or interfere with the regular celebration of the Established worship and its ordinances, but simply to supply with the means of religious influence such portions of the population as found no provision for their spiritual wants under the Establishment, and to furnish additional opportunities for religious instruction to such as derived less than they craved from the regular clergy. Wesley therefore exhorted his adherents to remain diligent attendants and constant communicants at the parish churches. His preaching hours, and those sanctioned by the Conference under him, were on secular days, or before and after the stated Sabbath services. He was at first strongly opposed to lay preaching, and yielded only to the necessities of the case, growing out of the impossibility of occupying the vast and increasing field of labor by the subjects of Episcopal ordination, and the multitude of persons endowed with the capacity of public exhortation, who both were ready to offer themselves for the work, and were desired as teachers by their brethren. From the appointment of preachers of this class grew the need of the itinerant system. It was impossible for men of slender education, without the habit of reading, study, or mental discipline, to sustain a continuous interest in their ministrations. They would of necessity have exhausted their resources in a few months, and wearisome self-repetition would have been the only alternative. Wesley therefore wisely ordained that they should not repeat themselves in the same place; but that, before their ministry could grow stale and unprofitable, they should enter on fresh fields of labor, and thus should sustain among their hearers the zest of novelty, while they themselves might receive from new scenes and associations the stimulus which could not be derived from the inception of new or the expansion of old ideas.

All the chapels, preachers' houses, and funded property belonging to the Connection remained vested in Wesley's name until his death, when, by a Deed of Declaration

previously executed, they passed under the control of the General Conference. By this deed, a perpetual hierarchy was established; for itinerant preachers alone were eligible to the Conference. This arrangement undoubtedly grew out of the limitation of Wesley's original purpose. He never contemplated the gathering of a body of laity capable of self-government. The evangelizing of the neglected and unprivileged was his exclusive aim. His institution was eleemosynary in its design, and as such was put under the government of the very trustees, on whose zeal and fidelity the strongest reliance could be placed. It was a home-missionary society; and in that aspect, it was more appropriate that it should be managed by the agents than by the objects of its charities.

These features have given at once the direction and the limit to the influence of Methodism in England. Had Wesley been a voluntary schismatic, he might have threatened even the permanence of the Establishment. He had the strong sympathy of the more devout among its office-bearers, and the clergy who became his coöperators were ready to follow his leading as separatists from the parent fold. The sanctity of apostolic succession was held very vaguely and loosely even by the High Church party, and was openly impugned by many of the ablest and most religious members of the Establishment. In the formation of a distinct and independent religious body, the masses of the people in many districts would have joined his standard. But by the position to which he resolutely adhered, he exerted a much more potent influence upon the Church than beyond its pale. He infused into its ministrations a vitality unknown before. It is to Methodism mainly that the present Evangelical party in the Church is indebted for its origin; and to the sense of divine realities, thus reawakened and diffused, is it owing that High Churchmanship is not now a proud negation, but an earnest formalism, instinct with its own quaint type of spiritual life, and embodying, in its mediæval garb, intense devotion and fervent propagandism.

In this country, Methodism planted itself on soil not otherwise preoccupied, and in its present condition it presents a bundle of strange anomalies. Its written constitution corresponds closely to that of the parent Society,

while their respective positions and environments have hardly a single point in common. The Methodist Church in the United States is a Church in all its parts and appointments; — that is, it administers all the ordinances of religion, recognizes children and entire families as under its guardianship, and, in the older portions of the country, aims not at aggression upon the ranks of the unprivileged, so much as at the permanent edification of those within its own inclosure. Yet in the *high pressure* movement of its machinery, in the closeness of its mutual *espionage*, in the weekly confessional of the class-meeting, and in the prominent place assigned to the discipline and probation of new converts, it seems constantly to presuppose either a peculiar urgency of spiritual destitution and need, or a transition period of religious excitement, alarm, and frequent conversion. Then, too, it seems, at first thought, surpassingly strange that Methodism should take deep root among republicans, always jealous of their rights. Yet not only is this more numerous than any other single sect in our republic; but it is an undoubted fact that a majority of its adherents have belonged to the ultra democratic party. How is it that they submit with so good a grace to an absolute sacerdotal oligarchy, which leaves them neither representation in the councils, nor disposing power over the property of their church? Itinerancy is also becoming an anomaly. Methodist ministers are expected to be diligent pastors as well as zealous preachers; and a greater amount of domiciliary visitation is demanded of them than of any other clergy whatever. Yet they are hardly permitted to form that acquaintance with their congregations, which is the one essential condition of their private usefulness, when they are compelled to renew their explorations among unfamiliar faces. Among the offices which a man can hold, that of the Christian pastor is in its genius the least nomadic of all. Yet more, the Methodists have now their Universities, and their highly-educated ministers, — men with substantial libraries and settled domestic habitudes, — men who have the foundation laid for sure growth in mental resources and professional eminence. And to such men, the system of itinerancy, so congenial to a hot head, a zealous heart, and a fallow mind, must be a most grievous necessity,

and will soon be regarded as intolerable. Preachers of this class will soon find it their duty and interest to leave the itinerant connection, and to *localize*, as their phrase is; and they will thus fall out of all places of official trust, and leave the administration of affairs to those whose ignorance and vagrant habits may render a frequent change of residence desirable. A similar improvement has taken place in the condition of Methodist congregations. If the entire country be taken into the account, this denomination has its full proportion of the intelligence, learning, rank, and property of the nation. It has numbered among its members the very highest functionaries in every department of the public administration. Is it not strange that such men will remain without the slightest control over their church property, and without a voice in the selection of their spiritual teachers and overseers? These difficulties have already been recognized and felt very extensively; and there are now comprehended under the general name of Methodists many independent congregations, and several large bodies of seceders, in which the laity exercise the same rights and functions as in other denominations. This process of disintegration must needs go on with increased rapidity; and the Wesleyan form of Methodism must have passed its culminating point, and will soon be visibly on the decline. The integrity of the denomination in this country can be preserved only by such modifications of its constitution, as shall permit the permanent settlement of its ministers, and cede to individual congregations the control of their property and the choice of their pastors.

The work before us is a philosophico-religious inquiry into the relation of Methodism to the past, the present, and the future. In point of style and method, it takes precedence of the entire series of Taylor's publications. It manipulates facts with a firmer grasp and with more practical skill than has been his wont, and has little of the element of vague hypothesis and dreamy theorizing which has often rendered his lucubrations more attractive than reliable. It contemplates Methodism not as an abstraction of imaginary potency, but as an actual working force in the religious world.

Our author traces a close analogy between the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth, and the Methodistic revival of the eighteenth, century. At the former epoch, religious faith was merged in ignorance and superstitious ritualism; at the latter, in indifference and infidelity. At the former, the Romish Church repressed all spiritual aspirations and tendencies by its unscrupulous exercise of authority; at the latter, the English Church maintained a costly apparatus of nominal Christianity, but failed to aid its members in the realization of Christian verities as subjects of personal experience and objects of personal reliance and hope. At the former, Luther and his coadjutors not only organized dissent and protest, but exerted a powerful reaction in purifying the morals and reawakening the religious zeal of the mother Church; at the latter, Wesley and his coadjutors effected much more for the Establishment than for the cause of separatism, and strengthened and consolidated the very hierarchy which they threatened to undermine. Viewed in this aspect, the primitive Methodists are to be regarded not as the founders of a sect, but as providential instruments for the reformation of Anglo-Saxon Christendom, — as the subjects of an unwontedly copious effusion of the holy spirit, — as the apostles of a new Pentecost of divine life and power.

After a chapter devoted to general considerations of this class, Taylor gives a detailed and discriminating sketch of "the Founders of Methodism." Then, under the title of "the Substance of Methodism," he attempts to analyze the elements of its success. The first was the awakening of the souls of men to a consciousness of their personal relation to the Almighty. The same religious truths had been preached dogmatically, sentimentally, æsthetically. The hearers had been convinced, but not impressed. Their sensibilities had been pleasurably excited; but their consciences had not been made active. Their tastes had been gratified; but the introspective faculty had not been set at work. Previous religious teaching had dealt mainly with the comprehensive aspects and relations of Christianity; Methodism shut up the individual soul to a heart-probing interview with the Author of its being. The contrast is happily drawn in the following extract.

“Taking an ordinary instance as sufficient for our purpose, let it be asked what it is that a Christian minister may believe that he sees before him on a Sunday? He may be sure that there is always much of the diffused and salutary influence of Christian doctrine within the compass of his stated congregation. With a few exceptions (probably) he addresses those who, whether in the way of a passive acquiescence, or as the result of reading and reflection, have come sincerely to accept Christianity as true: — they *do* ‘unfeignedly believe the holy Gospel.’ They *do* ‘look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.’ In this pulpit-prospect there is therefore a wide range for charitable hope, and ground enough on which the pastor’s consolation may rest, that he has not altogether ‘labored in vain.’

“Or to vary the instance, we can many of us recall the recollection of those over-crowding times when a preacher of unmatched power and grace — a perfect orator, used to fix every eye upon himself, through his hour of fluent and affluent sublimities. How did all faces gleam with an intensity of intellectual enjoyment, longing to vent itself in loud acclamations at every pause! And when that hour of fascination was over, what looks of gratulation were exchanged among friends from pew to pew! what shaking of hands, and how many smiles and nods passed to and fro, among the delighted people!

“But now all these pleasurable indications must be dismissed, for it is a Methodist of Wesley’s, or of Whitefield’s order that is in this same pulpit. As a preacher, he is not more sincere or right-minded than the last; and as an orator, he is far less highly gifted; he is not so accomplished a theologian, nor in any sense is he rather to be chosen than the other, as to his dispositions, or endowments, or as to his creed; but he is a Methodist, and his words sink into the hearts of those that hear. While he speaks, a suppressed anxiety rules the spirits of the crowd, and this feeling breaks forth into sighs, on every side: — the preacher’s style is not, in itself, oratorically affecting, and yet many weep, and an expression, not to be simulated, of anguish and of dread, marks many faces. What is it then that has taken place? It is this, that a sense, deep seated in the structure of human nature, but which hitherto has slumbered, has suddenly woke up. There is a tumult in the soul, while a power irresistible is claiming its rights over both body and soul. Instead of that interchange of smiles which lately had pervaded the congregation, while the orator was doing his part, now every man feels himself, for the hour, alone in that crowd. Even the preacher is almost forgotten; for an immortal and guilty spirit has come into the presence of Eter-

nal Justice. Within the dismayed heart it is as if the moral condition, hitherto unheeded, were spread abroad for strictest scrutiny. Quite gone from the thoughts are all those accessories of religious feeling, which so often in times past, had been the source of agreeable devout excitement. It is a dread of the supreme rectitude that now holds the mind and heart." pp. 142, 143.

Methodism, in the second place, carried the individualizing process into every department of the spiritual life. Not only in its thunder-tones of alarm, but in its persuasive, pathetic appeals, it addressed, not multitudes, but every soul in the multitude. Its Savior was not the benefactor of the race, but the personal friend of the isolated sinner, bearing his name "engraven on the palms of his hands and on his heart," making atonement for him on Calvary, ever living to intercede for him, sure to have done and suffered all in his behalf, even had he been the only lost sheep to be borne back to the fold.

A third element in the success of Methodism was its proclamation of entire and immediate salvation as the result of an effort of the will, an unreserved self-surrender to the divine mercy. In one aspect, indeed, the formation of the religious character is gradual and slow. Only step by step, and by prolonged and reiterated self-discipline, can the distance between a selfish, worldly life and entire self-consecration be overpassed. Yet there must be an epoch of choice and resolution, — a moment when the soul, in the omnipotence of a God-strengthened will, says, "I am henceforth not my own, but Christ's." This epoch must be reached in order to render spiritual growth possible. The preaching, which dwells mainly on the necessity and means of improvement, will leave a large proportion of the better class of its hearers under the control of those moral influences which involve no power of progressive goodness, — respectably undevout and decently non-religious. The preaching, that shuts up its hearers to a day, a moment, of conversion, can hardly fail so to concentrate the forces of evangelical truth as to multiply converts; and, though it may multiply apostates also, there will be a large residuum of spiritual life too vivid, too earnest, not to abide, and grow, and culminate. Then, too, the idea of entire salvation, of full pardon, acts at once on every noble and generous element of

the soul, and makes obedience and purity the dictate of honor and gratitude to infinite mercy. The sentence, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," alone can give speed and power to the mandate, "Go, and sin no more."

But under all these conditions, Methodism owed its success mainly to its having been, in its inception, and at every stage of its progress, an enterprise of pure evangelical philanthropy. Its vital principle was diffusion, propagation. Its pervading spirit was the missionary spirit. Its apostles attested their sincerity by every possible form of self-sacrifice. They spoke that language of sacrifice, which alone can convey the assurance and accomplish the work of love;—the language which the mother perpetually utters to her child, the patriot to his country, the reformer to the objects of his benevolent interpositions, nay, which God in Christ uttered upon Calvary to the whole human race.

Taylor next considers "the Form of (Wesleyan) Methodism." "As a scheme of Evangelic Aggression," it has written its own history, and has annexed to the domains of Christianity entire communities and whole classes of men, which could have been reached by no other religious agency which the past or the present century has seen in operation. "As a scheme of Religious Discipline and Instruction toward the people," it is manifestly less perfect than a settled, learned, and studious ministry. Its pastoral offices must needs be less thorough, constant, and influential; and their deficiency can be supplied by the class-system only as regards the more ignorant members. But it has the merit of doing much in this direction, where nothing had been previously done. It may impart to a large proportion of its adherents knowledge and impulse fully adequate to their receptivity. It at least excites and sustains that spiritual activity without which there can be no progress, but with which the ordinary resources of the Scriptures and the inward life can hardly fail to generate increasing intelligence, fidelity, and excellence. "As a Hierarchy, or scheme of spiritual government," Wesleyanism should in all fairness be exempted from severe judgment; for its founder probably had no intention of forming an independent or permanent institution, and, as we have seen, the very arrangements,

which might give the greatest umbrage to detractors or opponents, were devised to meet the temporary stress of circumstances, — to subserve the success of an enterprise, not to buttress the walls of an Establishment. “As a Body Corporate, related to Civil Law and Equity,” Wesleyan Methodism, in our author’s view, was born with a rope about its neck. By the Deed of Declaration, its administration is prescribed with such minuteness of detail as to leave no room for expansion or modification in conformity with the spirit of the present or any subsequent age. The preachers are even bound in perpetuity to preach that doctrine, (and no other,) which is contained in the first four volumes of John Wesley’s Sermons and in his Notes on the New Testament. This last condition alone is not only onerous and subversive of individual freedom; but is attended with peculiar difficulty in its discharge. Wesley, though endowed with what is commonly called a logical mind, and accustomed to lay great stress on verbal distinctions and definitions, lacked that comprehensive intellectual grasp, which embraces truth in its wholeness and unity, and presents it for contemplation in its relations and harmonies. System he had none; but he held together, not in fusion, but by mechanical compression, such portions of unlike systems, as seemed to him verified in his own experience, or adapted to strike the heaviest blow upon the stubborn consciences of the impenitent. A Calvinist in his passive affinities, an Arminian in his theory of man’s active powers, so far from approximating or indicating the meeting point or the relative provinces of divine and human agency, he wrote in his study as if man were a mere puppet of superior power, and preached on the common as if the human will were in its own right omnipotent. We have expressed our belief that, in this country, Methodism must be essentially changed in its constitution, in order to survive in unimpaired vigor. This process can be easily effected here; for the General Conference possesses the unrestricted right of amendment and abrogation. In England, however, the Conference exists by Wesley’s own charter, as a body of Trustees under his will; and how far the spirit of the English law may suffer the modifying of the conditions of a trust, with a view

to the surer attainment of its purposes, our author hazards no conjecture, and it would be rash for us to express an opinion in his silence.

The work under review closes with a chapter entitled "Methodism of the Future," — an instructive and eloquent chapter, yet connected only by remote analogy with the subject of the book. The author discerns, in the present condition of Protestant Christendom, symptoms and omens of fearful declension from the purity of faith and the simplicity of worship; and, as a believer in the regenerating efficacy and the ultimate supremacy of the gospel, he looks for a new Reformation, identical in its localities, and analogous in its processes, with those of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. Pantheism and Ritualism he rightly regards as the antagonist forces now most hostile to spiritual Christianity. Pantheism is the legitimate result of Rationalistic speculation. It is only in miracle, prophecy, and revelation, that, to human view, the Almighty detaches himself from his works, comes from behind the concealing curtain of general laws, shows himself as an independent and controlling force apart from the system which he creates and sustains. We doubt whether, independently of Judaism or Christianity, pure and spiritual monotheism has been reached and maintained in a single instance; for the highest conception of classic and oriental philosophy has been that of a God identical and commensurate with the universe. Modern English and American Deists constitute no exception to this statement; for they have generally been trained in the belief of miracle and revelation, and have retained the personality of God from the faith of their childhood. Germany, on the other hand, has given her sons no such training; and on her soil, every departure from belief in historical Christianity merges itself in Pantheism.

Ritualism derives its present hold upon the mind of Christendom, as we believe, for the intensely engrossing claims of material interests. It is harder now than ever to be a Christian in heart and in life. The outward world occupies, crowds, storms every avenue to the soul. The concerns of entire humanity are forced upon the cognizance of every reading, thinking, or busy man, and we might well apply to the *world* in its scriptural sense,

as antagonistic to the spiritual life, what Horace says of nature,

“Expelles furcâ, tamen usque recurret.”

Meanwhile, men feel the necessity of worship, and have too much intelligence and good taste to worship stocks and stones. They therefore gratify the instinct of reverence by those more covert forms of idolatry, in which altars, paintings, priests attired like solemn harlequins, and singing women, receive and absorb the worship that should rise higher, and send the worshipper back with an unburdened conscience to the arena of pecuniary competition, the routine of fashionable dissipation, or the enjoyment of luxurious ease.

Under both these burdens Christendom now groans, and religion suffers increasing detriment. We agree with our author in his felt need of a new, more fervent, more effective dispensation of the gospel, — of a dispensation which shall have for its basis the simple, unperverted facts and truths of the Scriptures fairly interpreted, and shall build upon them the fabric of a worship, in which mind and heart, sense and soul, shall combine to offer the entire and living sacrifice.

ART. VII. — *Lectures on the History of France*. By the RIGHT HONORABLE SIR JAMES STEPHEN, K. C. B., LL. D., Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge. New York: Harpers. 1852. 8vo. pp. 710.

BEFORE his appointment, as the successor of William Smyth, to the Professorship of Modern History in the University of Cambridge, Sir James Stephen was generally known as an author only by a series of remarkable contributions, on historical and religious topics, to the *Edinburgh Review*. These were collected and published in a separate volume about eight years ago. Without belonging to the highest class of critical productions in theology and history, they had striking merits both of